



# A STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT OF AUTONOMY IN ADOLESCENCE

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## ABSTRACT

**Achieving Autonomy:** The process of defining the self leads to a renegotiation of the parent-child relationship during adolescence. This renegotiation initially is prompted by the biological changes of puberty and changes in the way adolescents think. Adolescents become more autonomous as they choose to be part of the decision-making process, asking to be treated as more adult and taking responsibility for the consequences of the decisions they make.

**The Role of Parents:** The role parents play in the development of autonomy can be thought of (1) as promoting independence, in which adolescents must first distance themselves emotionally from their parents, or (2) as promoting self-determination by helping adolescents discover their interests and values. Self-determination contributes to self-esteem and well-being.

**Connectedness with Parents:** The sense of oneself that adolescents achieve as they distinguish their own attitudes and beliefs from those of their parents and become more self-governing is termed individuation. Family characteristics of individuality and connectedness facilitate the process of identity achievement. These qualities of family life help adolescents explore options while feeling emotionally supported even when family disagreements arise.

**KEY WORDS:** individuation, individuality, connectedness, Autonomy, Adolescent.

### Meaning of Adolescent?

The term adolescence comes from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means “to go into adulthood. Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, cognitive, sexual, social and emotional changes. Basically the transition between childhood to adulthood from about the age of 13 to 19 (known as the teen years). This age period is an adjustment period for the adolescent, their parents, and those who are in frequent contact with them.

Adolescence is known to be a period of discovery when much time is spent searching for an identity or purpose in life (Hartar 1990). It is an exciting and dynamic period in one's life (Devore and Ginsberg 2005). Adolescents are like fire - a spark at first, growing into a flame presenting the brightening into a blaze. The passage through adolescence is difficult or easy according to how he/she has been prepared for it (Barber 1990). When properly motivated and sufficiently guided they can do more in their life

**Adolescent Development:-** The adolescent development has various categories. Some of the major categories are:-

1. Physical Development.
2. Cognitive Development.
3. Social Development.
4. Psychosocial Development.

### What is Autonomy

The term autonomy is often used to refer to a set of psychosocial issues that are of particular importance during adolescence. Yet, the particular meaning of the term is often difficult to specify. Moreover, explaining how individuals become autonomous – and why some either do not or do so only partially—varies, depending upon one's initial assumptions about the meaning and significance of autonomy.

Basically the Autonomy refers to a person's self ability to think, feel and make decisions for his /her future. The term autonomy refers to an adolescents growing ability to think, feel, make decision. The development of the autonomy does not end after the teen years. Throughout adulthood, autonomy continues to develop whenever someone is challenged to act with a new level of self-reliance. Autonomy has special meaning during the preteen and teen years because it signifies that an adolescent is a unique, capable, independent person who depends less on parents and other adults.

### Why Autonomy is Important during adolescent age?

Adolescents develop their self autonomy through their relationships in their families and with people outside of their families in the society. Generally, during the preteen years and teen years they begin to have more opportunities to govern their own behavior. Many adolescents spend a great deal of time outside of direct supervision by adults. As parents and communities struggle to meet the demands of work and family, it is critical for adolescents to develop healthy self-governance of their behavior. Three types of self-governance include:

- Decision-making
- Self-reliance
- Conformity

Decision making abilities improve as we get older. During adolescence we become able to think in the abstract, weigh options, and look ahead to see the possible consequences of our actions. We begin to recognize the value of advice from others. We also begin to realize that advice from others may be influenced by their personal opinions.

Feelings of self-reliance also generally increase with age. However, there is an interesting catch: youth often think they are acting on their own accord, but adults may believe that a youth's decisions are being influenced by friends.

Conformity also is an important issue during the teen-age years. Conformity is sometimes thought of as “peer pressure.” It means following along with the behaviors or opinions of friends or others. Youth are most prone to peer conformity during the middle adolescent years—in about seventh and eighth grades. Younger adolescents are usually more influenced by parents. Peer pressure increases as teens grow older, but eventually most teens are less affected by peer pressure because they learn to make decisions in dependently of their peers.

**Types of Autonomy:** The autonomy has various types but the some major types is as under:-

- Emotional Autonomy
- Behavioral Autonomy
- Value /Moral Autonomy

**Emotional Autonomy:** it is relates to emotions, personal thinking and feelings, and how we relate to the people around us in our society. When problems arise emotionally autonomous teens are more able to look for their own solution. Emotional autonomy is usually achieved during the early adolescent age.

**Behavioral Autonomy:** it is related to behaviors. It refers to the ability to make decisions independently and to follow thought on these decisions with action. Behavioral Autonomy is usually achieved between the age of 15 to 18.

**Value/Moral Autonomy:** it is related to independent attitudes and benefits regarding spiritually, politics and morals. Value autonomy involves developing a set of beliefs that will guide one's thinking and behavior about right and wrong. Increasingly, adolescent's beliefs become more abstract, more principled and more internal

### Autonomy and family problems during adolescent:-

Development of autonomy helps prepare young people to make decisions and take care of themselves. Yet, attempts at autonomy are sometimes blamed for fighting that goes on between parents and adolescents. For many people, family turmoil and rebellion go hand in hand with adolescence.

For a long time, it was believed that detachment from parents was a normal part of growing up, and that family conflict was a normal part of the teenage years. However, research has found that most families stay close during the teenage years. Rather than a process of separation, most families experience a change, or transformation, in family relationships as adolescents develop a sense of autonomy.

During this time, teenagers begin to see their parents as human, and to take more and more responsibility for their own choices and actions. Often there are more quarrels at this time because adolescents want more independence and parents want more closeness and communication. Yet these arguments do not usually lead to lasting problems.

#### How Adults and Family Members Can Help?

There are the various ways in real life to help the adolescent:

1. Communicate Openly
2. Involves them into Planning.
3. Guide them regarding their future.
4. Stay Calm.
5. Involve in Decision Making.
6. Helps in Problem Solving.
7. Appreciate them when required.

#### Conclusions of the Study:

Adolescent development is characterized by biological, cognitive, and social changes and the Autonomy development is characterized by the Emotional, Behavioral and Value/ Moral Autonomy. Social changes are particularly notable as adolescents become more autonomous from their parents, spend more time with peers, and begin exploring romantic relationships and sexuality. Adjustment during adolescence is reflected in identity formation, which often involves a period of exploration followed by commitments to particular identities. Adolescence is characterized by risky behavior, which is made more likely by changes in the brain in which reward-processing centers develop more rapidly than cognitive control systems, making adolescents more sensitive to rewards than to possible negative consequences. Value autonomy means independent attitudes and beliefs regarding spiritually, politics, and morals. Despite these generalizations, factors such as country of residence, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation shape development in ways that lead to diversity of experiences across adolescence.

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